



Genesius Guild

2005 Season
Study Guide

Illinois Humanities Council



About the Genesisius Guild

For 49 years, the Genesisius Guild has presented free, outdoor productions of classic works in Lincoln Park, Rock Island, Illinois, using an outdoor stage constructed by members of the amateur theatre group. Over time, the program has grown to include Shakespearean drama, Greek tragedy in mask, modern interpretations of Greek comedy, opera in English, and professional ballet.

This program is designed to give citizens of the Quad City region easy access to the great works of Western Civilization; to provide to all who are interested an opportunity to perform in great works of art; to foster an appreciation of and dedication to the best in performance art.

The guild is supported by the Genesisius Theatre Foundation, a tax-exempt organization charged with promoting the classics; by the Rock Island Park Board, continuing an 80-year commitment to supporting local dramatic performance; through sponsorships of local organizations, grants from Iowa and Illinois Arts Councils, and the contributions of its audience.

The group is open to all who wish to participate. Tryouts for the four plays will be held at 1 pm on consecutive Sundays: May 29th and June 5th. Two weekday tryouts are also scheduled for 7 pm on May 31st and June 2nd. No parts are pre-cast. Everyone auditioning has an equal opportunity to secure roles on and off stage. The guild offers an excellent opportunity for students and aspiring actors of all ages to gain experience by working - in a congenial atmosphere - on some of the greatest plays ever written.

During the summer season, the guild may be contacted at two telephone numbers: 788-7113 (the Lincoln Park stage) or 786-5420 (the guild costume house, 1120 40th Street, Rock Island). Additional information, as well as a rehearsal schedule and a full copy of this study guide, may be obtained by visiting the guild's web site at www.genesius.org.

Summer Schedule 2005

Tryouts (at Lincoln Park Stage):

Sunday, May 29, 1 pm
 Tuesday, May 31, 7 pm
 Thursday, June 2, 7 pm
 Sunday, June 5, 1 pm

June 18, 19, 25 & 26	Gilbert & Sullivan: "The Pirates of Penzance" (Opera@augustana)
July 2, 3, 9, 10	Sophocles: "Oedipus At Colonus"
July 16, 17, 23, 24	Shakespeare: "Much Ado About Nothing"
July 30, 31, August 6, 7	Aristophanes: "Knights"
August 12, 13, 14	"Ballet Under the Stars" (Ballet Quad Cities)

All performances at 8 pm
 Lincoln Park, R.I. Classic Theatre
 Admission: free

The 2005 Season

Last summer, the Genesis Guild began a three-year cycle of Sophocles' Oedipus plays. The sequence began in 2004 with the celebrated tragedy, "Oedipus Rex," the legend of a man who spent his life trying to avoid the terrible fate which had been predicted for him. His great intelligence and determination were not enough. He ran headlong into the very crimes he tried to escape.

This year, the story proceeds to the enigmatic end of his life in "Oedipus At Colonus." In 2006, the guild will repeat its most popular Greek tragedy, "Antigone," which tells of the fortunes of Oedipus' children. That play will be preceded by Aeschylus' brief "Seven Against Thebes" which fills in a dramatic gap between the second and third Sophocles dramas.

"Much Ado About Nothing" might be considered the Elizabethan ancestor of Hollywood screwball comedies. It's one of Shakespeare's most delightful works, featuring the "merry war" between Beatrice and Benedick.

The Aristophanic farce, "Knights" is that author's most intense work, a no-holds-barred attack on Athens' popular ruler, Cleon. It was considered so dangerous a comedy that Aristophanes himself took the role of Cleon.

Gilbert and Sullivan return to the guild stage this year with "Pirates of Penzance," a musical comedy that has never been off the world stage.

The season will conclude with "Ballet Under the Stars," a weekend preview of Ballet Quad Cities' 2005/6 season.

The year, the guild's schedule has been somewhat shortened to accommodate the spring reconstruction of the stage platform. In 2006, the guild's fiftieth anniversary season, the group will return to its usual program of four complete plays, an opera, and ballet.

Gilbert & Sullivan

These two names have been inextricably linked in the public mind since their first collaboration in 1871. They started out on divergent paths, but were brought together almost by chance. Once in tandem, they were never able to follow separate careers, even though Sullivan desperately wanted to.

William Schwenck Gilbert was born in London in 1836, the son of a retired naval surgeon. While the family was visiting in Italy, the two-year-old Gilbert was kidnapped by brigands but quickly ransomed. Apart from this unusual circumstance, he had a normal upbringing.

After he finished his schooling, he studied to become an artillery officer. Later he took a government job, then became a lawyer at 28. He possessed a caustic wit which he employed in writing dramatic criticism and humorous verse. He wrote two highly successful plays between 1868 and 1875 which made him very wealthy.

In 1871, he collaborated on a satiric ballet, "Thespis," with the brilliant young composer, Arthur Seymour Sullivan, thus beginning an association which would produce 14 popular operettas which have been performed around the world ever since.

Knighted in 1907, Gilbert died four years later, at the age of 74, while attempting to rescue a drowning woman.



* * *

Arthur Seymour Sullivan was a musical prodigy. He was born in 1842 into a musical family. He composed his first work at the age of 8 and by 10 had mastered all the instruments in his father's military band.

He won the first Mendelssohn Scholarship at the age of 14 and several others in sequence. After studying in Germany, he returned to England at the age of 20 and composed an incidental score to "The Tempest," which made him famous overnight.

Sullivan composed in several classic forms, producing a symphony, an opera, and three oratorios. He was celebrated as the composer of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "The Lost Chord." After composing the music for two comic operas, he formed a partnership with William S. Gilbert. It was a stormy relationship, but it produced the works for which Sullivan is remembered today.

He was knighted in 1883 by Queen Victoria and died in 1900 after an 18-year siege of painful kidney stones. It is said that his most beautiful music was composed when he was in the greatest pain.

Pirates of Penzance

by Gilbert & Sullivan

“The Pirates of Penzance” was the third collaboration between Gilbert and Sullivan, following their enormously popular “H.M.S. Pinafore.” The work was simultaneously given premieres in New York and London in order to secure copyright protection on both sides of the Atlantic. The production is a revival by Opera@Augustana.



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The opera begins at a rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall. A group of pirates, under the command of the Pirate King, Richard, are drinking and playing cards. One of them, the apprentice pirate Frederic, is seated with the pirates' maid-of-all-work, Ruth. He is obviously unhappy.

The Pirate King congratulates Frederic on his successful grasp of the profession of piracy. Frederic says it's simply because he is “the slave of duty,” always doing what he must. We find out from Ruth that he is a pirate because of a mistake. She was supposed to apprentice young Frederic to a pilot, but misunderstood her instructions, bringing him to the pirate band instead. Now that Frederic is 21, his apprenticeship is over.

Frederic informs the pirates that, as a slave of duty, he will be honor-bound to oppose them once his apprenticeship expires at the stroke of midnight, which explains his melancholy. He has grown to like his pirate comrades. When the pirates complain that they can't seem to make any money at their profession, Frederic feels honor-bound to tell them why: they are too tender-hearted. Being orphans themselves, they can never take advantage of other orphans. This news has gotten around so that everyone they try to pillage claims he or she is an orphan, too.

The pirates leave Ruth and Frederic alone and Frederic asks her - the only woman he has ever seen - if she is beautiful. She answers that she is, but just then a troop of young women comes into view and Frederic realizes that Ruth has lied to him and turns on her bitterly. She leaves while Frederic hides to watch the young women.

They are wards of Major-General Stanley who has just purchased an estate nearby. The women decide to go wading and, just as they take off their shoes and stockings, Frederic emerges from the cave where he has been hiding. He tells them he is a pirate, but hopes that one of these beauties will marry him. All reject him but Mabel, the major-general's daughter, who sings "Poor wand'ring One."

At this point, the pirates sneak into the scene and each one embraces a girl as his bride. The general enters and introduces himself ("I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General"). When he discovers they are the celebrated pirates of Penzance, he tells them he is an orphan and the pirates disgustedly let the general and women leave.

The second act opens at the major-general's estate. Stanley's wards, Mabel, and Frederic listen as the general confesses that he lied to the pirates about being an orphan. He has come to the tombs of his ancestors to humble himself in atonement. Frederic asks how he can have ancestors on an estate he just bought. The general says he feels he is their descendant "by purchase."

Frederic tells the general that he will lead an expedition against the pirates at midnight with the aid of the police he has summoned. Frederic is left alone. Suddenly the pirate king and Ruth appear at a window. Instead of shooting him, they tell him that he is still bound as an apprentice. Since he was born on February 29th, he is not 21, but only five years old. He must stay with them for another 63 years.

Once again a duty-bound pirate, he tells the pirate king that the general lied to him; that he is not really an orphan. The pirate king swears that he will attack the estate that very night. Frederic pleads with them in vain until they depart.

Mabel returns, looking for Frederic. He tells her of his sudden reversal of fortune and leaves to rejoin the pirate band. Mabel, inspired by Frederic's heroic sense of duty, decides that she should behave accordingly. She tells the police to do their duty and capture the pirates.

The pirates approach, singing. The general comes to see what is afoot. The girls enter as well. The pirates and police struggle, and the pirates win. But before the pirates can kill the general for his lie, they discover that all of them are not orphans but noblemen who have gone wrong. Everyone forgives everyone else and the ex-pirates win their brides.



Sophocles

Sophocles was born around 497 B.C.E. in Colonus, a deme (suburb) of Athens. His father was Sophillus, a successful businessman. While in his youth, Sophocles won prizes in wrestling and music. In those days, a boy was expected to excel in both the arts and athletics. Sophocles was fortunate to be able to study with the celebrated musician, Lampros. When the Athenians held a celebration to mark their victory over the Persians at Salamis, Sophocles led a chorus in singing to the accompaniment of a lyre.

During Sophocles' youth, Aeschylus was the dominant figure in Greek tragedy. In 468 B.C.E., at the age of 28, Sophocles competed against Aeschylus in the annual dramatic competition and won. He was to continue winning throughout his life, scoring first prize 20 to 24 times and never scoring lower than second. In all, he wrote over 120 plays, only seven of which survive today.

Sophocles was universally loved. He was friends with the great men of his time: including the historian Herodotus and Pericles, ruler of Athens. He was elected to high office and as general of the army at least once. He had several children, some of whom also became dramatists.

Sophocles made significant improvements in theatrical practice. He added a third actor, enlarged the chorus from 12 to 15, devised painted scenery, conceived the idea of the tetralogy - a series of three serious plays followed by a satiric play, all on the same general theme - and added several costume details and properties which became traditional.

He lived long enough to compete with - and defeat - the tragic poet Euripides. He lived to the age of 91, dying in 406 B.C.E., having outlived Aeschylus and Euripides, and having actively participated in Athenian public life from the height of its glory till just before its defeat by Sparta.



Oedipus At Colonus by Sophocles

At the end of his life, Sophocles turned once again to the subject of one of his most powerful tragedies, Oedipus the King. Although Oedipus had striven all his life to avoid the fate predicted for him - that he would kill his father and marry his mother - he discovers at the end of "Oedipus Rex," that he is guilty of patricide and incest. He blinds himself after the suicide of his wife-mother, Jocaste, and asks to be sent into exile. "Oedipus At Colonus" takes up the story twenty years later.

The second tragedy served two purposes for Sophocles: it addressed the question aroused by the first play, "Is Oedipus a criminal or a victim?" It also is a tribute to Colonus, the deme (suburb) of Athens in which Sophocles was born and raised.

The play not only addresses the end of Oedipus' life, but sets the stage for the fate that will befall his children in "Antigone." The tragedy was performed in 402 B.C.E., after Sophocles' death, and was awarded first prize.

One commentator calls the story "a profoundly spiritual tale . . . of prophesized redemption. Sophocles deals with no particular creed or belief. He is more concerned with the general spirituality of every human . . . who faces the conflicts of life and the inevitability of death."

* * *

SCENE I

Oedipus, blind and beggared, arrives at Colonus, led by his elder daughter, Antigone, who has accompanied her father into exile. They come to a grove where the old man sits to rest. A stranger approaches and warns them that they are trespassing on a sanctuary sacred to the Furies. The stranger hastens away to tell the citizens of Colonus of the old man's sacrilege. Oedipus recognizes that his life is drawing to an end because it had been foretold that he would die in such a place.

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS



CHORAL DIALOGUE (PARADOS)

A band of citizens from Colonus arrives, looking for the man who has violated the sacred precinct. Oedipus reveals himself and agrees to leave the safety of the grove if they promise not to harm him. They ask who he is and when he gives them his name, they are horrified, knowing his history, and demand that he leave so as not to pollute sacred ground. Antigone begs them to relent.

SCENE II

Oedipus chides the citizens for not observing the rule of hospitality. They tell him they have sent for Athens' ruler, Theseus, so that he may judge what to do about the situation. At this point, Oedipus' second daughter, Ismene, enters with news. Oedipus' sons are contending for the throne of Thebes and the Oracle has prophesized that the welfare of Thebes depends on Oedipus' presence there, living or dead. Oedipus asks the citizens to protect him and he will prove a blessing to their land. They ask that he offer a sacrifice to the Furies and he sends Ismene to do so.

CHORAL DIALOGUE

As they wait for Theseus' arrival, the citizens ask Oedipus to tell them his story. He does so, with great reluctance and pain.

SCENE III

Theseus enters and promises Oedipus that he will give him refuge and will protect him should anyone try to remove him by force.

CHORAL POEM

The action of the play is interrupted as the citizens chant a celebrated poem praising Athens and Colonus: the land itself; the olive tree which supplies their wants; Athens for its splendor; and Poseidon for the skill of taming horses, something for which Colonus is noted.



SCENE IV

Creon, the present ruler of Thebes, enters with soldiers to take Oedipus back to his city, in order to win the favor of the gods. When Oedipus refuses, Creon tells him that he has taken Ismene captive and proceeds to seize Antigone. The citizens object and try to resist. They are reinforced by Theseus who returns with his guard and orders Creon to leave the land and release his captives. Creon reluctantly obeys, leading Theseus and his men to the place where the girls are being held captive.

CHORAL POEM

The citizens imagine the progress of Theseus and his men and their triumph over Creon.

SCENE V

Theseus returns with Antigone and Ismene, restoring them to their father. He tells Oedipus that a stranger from Argos has come to Colonus, asking for him. Oedipus immediately realizes that it is his son Polyneices, come to ask for his aid. When Oedipus went into exile, the two brothers agreed to share the throne, each serving for a year in turn. But Eteocles, with Creon's help, has refused to let Polyneices resume power. Now, Polyneices has raised an army of champions at Argos and plans to lay siege to Thebes to depose Eteocles and win back the throne.

CHORAL POEM

The citizens meditate on the difficulties and disappointments of life and the release offered from worldly anguish by death. They claim that the best fate of all is not to be born; the second, to quickly die.

SCENE VI

Polyneices approaches, in tears, repenting his long neglect of his father. He asks Oedipus to help him kill his brother. Oedipus is furious at the thought of one of his sons wishing to kill the other and, in a rage, curses them both, praying that they will kill each other in the coming civil war. Antigone is heartbroken at the thought of what lies ahead for her brothers.

CHORAL POEM AND DIALOGUE

As the citizens discuss what has just happened, there is a terrific peal of thunder and flash of lightning. Oedipus realizes that his end is near and sends for Theseus to come quickly. The citizens are disturbed at the celestial fireworks and add their voices to Oedipus' hoping for Theseus' prompt arrival.

SCENE VII

Theseus enters and Oedipus bids him follow as the blind man intends to go forward without a guide. He knows that his death is near and promises that it will be a blessing for Colonus and Athens. Oedipus and Theseus exit toward the lightning.

CHORAL POEM

The citizens pray for Oedipus' passing.

SCENE VIII

A messenger enters to tell the citizens what he has seen. Oedipus, his daughters, and Theseus entered the sacred ground and heard a voice from heaven summoning Oedipus. The blind man asked Theseus to protect his daughters. When that promise is given, Oedipus and Theseus enter the depths of the sacred grove, from whence Oedipus is caught up into the presence of the gods.

CHORAL DIALOGUE

Antigone and Ismene enter and are consoled by the citizens. Theseus returns and tells the girls that he cannot show them the place where their father left this earth; it is to be a sacred secret. The girls then ask to be returned to Thebes where they hope to prevent a bloody war between their brothers. The citizens close the play:

*Now let the weeping cease;
Let no one mourn again.
These things are in the hands of god.*

About the Play

The play deals with the impending death of a great, though not necessarily good, man, who has faced all the trials and challenges of life and now looks forward to the last, his death.

In his analysis of the tragedy, critic Cedric H. Whitman goes to the core of Sophocles' creation:

“The Oedipus at Colonus . . . lacks the daemonic elan of the other two Theban plays; it contains less obvious conflict, save what is concentrated in the scenes with Creon and Polyneices. But in Sophoclean tragedy, action may be defined as the functioning of the hero's will.

“If (the play) fails to exhibit the dramatic alacrity of the earlier plays, it is for a good reason. The play presents the long slow reversal of the Oedipus Rex. Instead of the abrupt plunge down the precipice, the movement here is laboriously uphill, and endurance is the criterion. . . Oedipus himself sets the tempo for the play in which, hated by the gods and abandoned, he finds his answer to them. The gods who destroyed him earlier make no further move, either for or against him, until they finally acknowledge his dignity with the affidavit of their heavenly thunder and bring to pass the moment in which he is complete.”

In almost his first words in the play, Oedipus lists the three great elements that constitute his moral fibre:

*For sufferings, and length of time, my comrade,
And third, nobility, teach me content.*

PRONUNCIATION NOTE:

No literary name is more commonly mispronounced than Oedipus. Americans, in particular, seem to reverse the first two letters, making oe sound like eo in leopard and jeopardy: an “eh” sound

The correct pronunciation is a long e, as in Phoenix, foetus, and Phoebe. The ancient Greek state of Boeotia is pronounced bee-OH-shee-ah and Oedipus is pronounced EE-deh-pus.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford, England shortly before April 26, 1564. He died in the same village on April 23, 1616. His christening occurred on April 26, and historians prefer to place his birth on the 23rd, to align his birth with his death, but he probably was born a few days earlier.

It also helps that April 23rd is the Feast day of St. George, England's patron saint.

Shakespeare came from a Catholic family at a time when it was becoming dangerous to be a papist. His father was a prominent citizen, rising to the position of mayor. His subsequent fall from eminence may well have been a consequence of the religious tensions of the time. At any rate, Shakespeare made it his life's ambition to restore the family to its former position, something he achieved through the fame and fortune he secured through his work as a playwright and actor.

Shakespeare was educated at the Stratford school and his plays reflect the topics he studied there. The country life of Stratford is also present in his works, even when they are set in exotic places. This is especially true of the few plot lines which were drawn from his own imagination. The majority of his works were based on earlier versions by other authors.

It is likely that he served as a household instructor/entertainer during early manhood, but we have no concrete evidence of this. It is also likely that he joined a troupe of travelling actors when they visited Stratford, short one performer.



However it happened, we find him in London, leaving wife and children behind in Stratford, but not abandoning them. He made regular visits home and lavished his income on their welfare.

He first came to prominence as a poet, but was soon the best-known playwright in London, attracting the envy of some, but the general admiration of most. He collaborated with other playwrights, but often wrote alone. Certainly, his great plays are the product of a single sensibility.

He began with comedies and histories, but gradually moved into the nobler realm of tragedy, producing the greatest poetic dramas in the English language. He retired from the stage and returned to live out his days with honor in Stratford. Before finally retiring, he collaborated with John Fletcher on several plays when the younger man was engaged to replace him as the King's Men's resident author.

Shakespeare's dramatic creations are of such an exceptional nature that some scholars have tried to assign their authorship to others, especially some lesser poets and noblemen who had university training. The reasoning being that only someone with a college degree would be capable of such dazzling work.

This is a pointless exercise, as Shakespeare had the same education as Ben Jonson, an acknowledged playwright, who, incidentally, was indebted to Shakespeare for getting his plays accepted for performance. There is also the fact that the plays demonstrate an intimate knowledge of both the theatre and the men who made up his acting company. It is fairly easy to portray the nobility and to cobble up information on foreign lands. What is not so easy for a nobleman is to understand country life to the ground, which was one of Shakespeare's great dramatic strengths.

Shakespeare was simply a unique genius, rather like Mozart, whose musical inspiration and creations are inexplicably beyond that of other composers, even as Shakespeare's works stand at the pinnacle of poetic drama.

Much Ado About Nothing by Shakespeare

This is one of Shakespeare's most admired works, a comedy with dark overtones; a combination of two love stories, involving people of contrasting temperaments; and a resolution by the humble of the problems of the mighty. Unique among his comedies, three-quarters of the play is in prose.

A key to staging the play may be found in the title. To the English of Shakespeare's day, "nothing" and "noting" sounded very similar. The plot proceeds through a series of misunderstanding, brought about by "noting": everything is overheard, misheard, or constructed on purpose for eavesdropping. "Nothing" is also a word of female sexual connotation, suggesting much ado in the pursuit of women.

* * *

A war has ended. The victorious soldiers, led by Don Pedro, head for the town of Messina to visit Leonato, who shares his house with his daughter, Hero, and his niece, Beatrice. Accompanying Don Pedro are his illegitimate brother, Don John, - newly restored to favor - and two young gallants, Benedick and Claudio.

Claudio falls in love with Hero at first sight. Benedick and Beatrice are no strangers to each other and, perhaps, were once in love. Now, they resume "a merry war" of words, professing their mutual disdain. While Beatrice and Benedick never seem to stop talking, Claudio and Hero are relatively silent. Claudio, at a loss for words, engages Don Pedro to woo Hero for him. Benedick declares that he will never be in love.



Don John, silent and sullen, “not a man of many words,” expresses his unhappiness at the joy of others in conference with his henchmen, Borachio and Conrad. He resolves to do what he can to frustrate Claudio’s marriage plans.

At a masked ball, Don Pedro dances with Hero and gets her agreement to wed Claudio. However, Don John, suggests to Claudio that the prince woos for himself. This misunderstanding is shared by others, but is soon resolved, and plans for the weddings are laid. To pass the time before the wedding, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato plot to enlist the aid of Hero and others to “bring Signor Benedick and Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection th’one with th’other.”

But Don John still hopes to thwart the wedding. Borachio tells him of a way to do it. He is having an affair with Hero’s lady-in-waiting, Margaret. He will arrange to be seen with her at Hero’s window. If Don John can bring Don Pedro and Claudio to witness the encounter, they will think it is Hero and break off the match.

The plot to pair Benedick and Beatrice proceeds. Leonato, Don Pedro, and Claudio arrange to gossip within Benedick’s hearing. They speak mournfully of Beatrice, claiming that she is hopelessly in love with Benedick, but unable to tell him for fear he will scorn her. Benedick is convinced and decides he is in love. When Beatrice comes to announce that supper is ready, he construes her sharp words into expressions of affection.

Hero and her companions, Ursula and Margaret, then undertake to deceive Beatrice in the same manner, with similar results.

Don John informs Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero is carrying on a secret affair and offers to bring them to her window that night so they may see for themselves.

At this point, we meet the members of the watch: Dogberry, a self-important, bumbling leader of the group; Verges, a simple, old man; George Seacoal, and others. They take their positions, intending to do more sleeping than watching.

Borachio and Conrad enter, well on their way to being drunk. Borachio tells Conrad how he and his master have deceived Don Pedro and Claudio, who plan to denounce Hero when they meet for their wedding at the church. The members of the watch, not too sure what’s going on, but suspecting treachery, arrest the men.

Leonato’s house is in an uproar as they prepare for the wedding. Dogberry arrives to tell him that they have arrested two suspicious men. Leonato, distracted, tells him to interrogate the men himself.

The wedding party arrives at the church. There, Claudio denounces Hero for what he supposes is her licentiousness. Hero, confounded by this accusation, faints. Leonato protests, but Don Pedro and Don John tell him that they have seen her with their own eyes, at her window, in the arms of another man. They leave amid general consternation.

When Hero revives and protests her innocence, the Friar suggests that they tell people she died in shock, to see if that will not soften Claudio's heart. Beatrice and Benedick, left alone, finally express their love for each other. Beatrice asks Benedick to show his love by killing Claudio. He reluctantly agrees.

In the meantime, Dogberry brings Conrad and Borachio before the Sexton. Members of the watch tell what they overheard: how Don John and his followers had deceived Claudio and Don Pedro. The Sexton hurries off to inform Don Pedro.

Leonato and his brother Antonio bitterly upbraid Claudio for his behavior. After they leave, Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel. Then the Sexton enters with Borachio who confesses his villainy. Claudio is grief-stricken. He believes he has caused Hero's death through his gullibility. Don Pedro also learns that his guilty brother has fled the scene.

When Leonato learns the truth, he confronts Claudio, who is devastated. He tells Claudio that he can gain forgiveness only by making public atonement at the family monument and then by marrying Antonio's daughter, sight unseen. Claudio agrees at once.

Don Pedro and Claudio visit what they suppose to be Hero's tomb, where Claudio hangs an epitaph on the tomb and has a tribute sung. Don Pedro dismisses his followers with the most beautiful lines in the play:

Good morrow, masters, put your torches out.
The wolves have prey'd, and look, the gentle day,
Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
Thanks to you all and leave us. Fare you well.



Everyone gathers at the church for the wedding. To Claudio's delight, his new bride is revealed to be Hero. Beatrice and Benedick learn that they have been tricked into love, yet each has written of that love and their writing is offered as proof that their love is real. The play ends with two happy couples and an admonition to Don Pedro, "get thee a wife."

Sources

"Much Ado About Nothing" was probably written between the summer of 1598 and the spring of 1599. The role of Dogberry seems designed for the comic actor Will Kemp, who left the King's men in 1599.

Shakespeare's play is a variation on an old Sicilian story. The original source dealt with the story of Hero and Claudio, a love temporarily thwarted by the evil Don John, and later repaired. Ariosto tells a version of the plot in *Orlando Furioso* which was translated into English by Sir John Harrington in 1591. There is another Italian source: Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*, which was cast in English prose by George Whetstone ("The Rock of Regard") in 1576, and in verse by Edmund Spenser in *The Fairie Queene* (1590).

While Shakespeare undoubtedly drew on one or more of these sources, much of the play is his own invention, in particular the sparkling battle of wits and subsequent marriage of Beatrice and Benedick. Technically, they are subsidiary characters, but their love story dominates the play.

A third Shakespearean invention is the comic sub-plot of Dogberry and the Watch. These characters have nothing to do with Sicily, but are taken straight from Shakespeare's ironic observations of English village life.

Comments

In her book, "Shakespeare After all," Marjorie Garber makes some interesting observations about names in the play. Beatrice means "one who blesses," Benedick means "one who is blessed," and Borachio means "the drunken one." She also draws interesting comparisons to *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello*, and *A Winter's Tale*.

She considers *Much Ado* "the forerunner of Restoration comedy, of the 18th and 19th Century 'comedy of manners,' and of what has come to be called 'screwball comedy,' the bantering, witty, sophisticated romantic plots that emerged in the films of the 1930s and 1940s." She cites philosopher and critic Stanley Cavell who classified such films as *Adam's Rib* and *The Philadelphia Story* as "comedies of re-marriage."

Other Commentators

Wylie Sypher: “by assuming the satyric mask, Benedick and Beatrice are playing the role of boaster as well as the role of mocker. Their independence is, as Nietzsche would say, a privilege of the strong.”

Francis Fergusson: “One might say that *Much Ado* presents a comic vision of mankind, while the purpose of *The Comedy of Errors* is closer to that of the vaudevillian. who gauges his success by clocking the laughs. . . Both are concerned with mistaken identity, but in *Comedy* the mistake is simply a mistake in fact, while in *Much Ado*, it is a failure of insight.”

George Steiner: “The function of contrast is beautifully shown in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Nearly the entire play is written in prose. The few passages of verse are only a kind of shorthand to quicken matters. . . Beatrice and Benedick . . . are lovers in the middle range of passion, enamoured neither of the flesh nor altogether of the heart, but caught in the enchantment of each other’s wit.”

Thomas Marc Parrot: “*Much Ado About Nothing* is a play of action sprung from character, but it is also a play of vivacious and amusing dialogue. In fact, a great part of the fun of this play comes from the spoken word; often, indeed, the action halts while we listen to a rippling stream of speech.”

Aristophanes

Little is known about the man considered by many scholars to be the theatre's finest author of comedies. He was born around 445 B.C.E. into a wealthy family, the son of Philippus. His family probably belonged to the class of Athenians known as "Knights," "the prosperous, generally conservative stratum of society between the rich aristocracy and the peasants and urban proletariat."



Something of his life may be gleaned from his plays. We know that he was bald, that his family had an interest in the island of Aegina, that he never staged his own plays, preferring to hand them over to a producer/director, and that he had a life-long dislike for an Athenian leader named Cleon, whom he attacked in many of his plays.

His outlook is generally conservative, in opposition to the new democratic structure of his city-state. In all of his extant plays, there are direct or indirect references to the tragedies of Euripides. He makes fun of them, but seems to be drawn to some of the ideas expressed in them. So much so that the comic poet Cratinus coined a word to express the phenomenon: "Euripidaristophanization."

Eleven of his fifty-plus comedies survive, all of them touching on events and ideas prevalent in Athens during his lifetime. Although he satirized Socrates in "The Clouds," he may very well have been involved with the intellectuals who were part of that philosophic circle. He figures in Plato's Symposium, in which he and Socrates out-drink all the other guests, ending the night-long party in conversation.

Aristophanes won more first prizes than any other comic poet. He died shortly after the production of "Plutus," somewhere around 385 B.C.E. He was survived by three sons - Philippos, Araros, and Nikostratos - all of whom followed in his profession.

The Knights by Aristophanes

While almost all of Aristophanes' surviving comedies attack the institutions of the state and Greek religious figures, "The Knights" is a spectacularly philippic drama, an all-out assault on Athenian political leadership. So risky was the rhetorical slap at Athen's popular ruler (who was in the audience) that the poet decided not to give Cleon's part to an actor, but to take the role himself. To be sure people knew who was daring to insult their leader, he disdained wearing a mask, but simply painted his face white.

Aristophanes' audacity was breath-taking, but the audience appreciated his skill and courage, awarding the comedy first prize.

* * *

When the play begins, two generals are bemoaning the popular election of Cleon as leader of Athens. They realize that the vulgar demagogue will never stop the interminable conflict with Sparta and they can think of no way to reverse the war fever that drives the fighting on. They are disgusted with Demos, the personification of the people of Athens, who voted for such a transparently worthless scoundrel.

They spend the play insulting Cleon's character and ability (although not actually using his name) and plot ways to convince Demos to oust the ruler they fear will destroy the state. The play ends in drolleries, in which the generals, Cleon, and his opponent try to woo Demos with flatteries, prophecies, and bribes, somewhat offsetting the heavy-handed sarcasm of the first portion.

That's the way Aristophanes structured the play. As usual, the Genesis Guild will use the plot as a framework for re-writing and updating the comedy. This annual, farcical treatment of Aristophanes is a guild tradition, ending a summer of Greek and Shakespearean works in a burst of energy.



About the play

Adapting the play means bringing current people and situations into the plot and expanding it - sometimes dropping it altogether - in order to bring the spirit of Aristophanes' works - if not the letter - into the present.



Song parodies and dances are used to replace most of the choral interludes and some of the dialogue.

Since politics is such a heated subject in this divided country and all are aware of continuing global unrest, there are many possibilities for the adaptation. But no one knows just how it will turn out. The play won't be re-written until three weeks before it opens.

The comedy ends in a traditional Mack Sennett chase (ask your grandparents who he was), with characters running and leaping in a frantic, three-minute routine that ends when everyone collapses in exhaustion.

The play isn't cast until July 24th, with parts normally being given as a reward for participation in other guild plays.



“Ballet Under the Stars”

For the ninth year, Ballet Quad Cities, the Quad Cities’ resident professional ballet company, will present a free program in Lincoln Park as part of the Genesis Guild’s summer schedule of classic performances. “Ballet Under the Stars” not only concludes the guild’s season, it also provides an introduction to BQC’s 2004/2005 performance schedule. Copies of that schedule will be available at the Lincoln Park presentation.

The company will perform on three consecutive evenings: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, August 12, 13, and 14. The program will be drawn from the BQC repertoire of original and standard ballets and is designed to appeal to a broad age range. As is their custom, BQC will include a traditional “story” ballet in the program.

One of Ballet Quad Cities’ winter events to anticipate is the company’s acclaimed production of “The Nutcracker” to be presented at the Adler Theatre in Davenport, in November, 2005

GENESIUS GUILD SUMMER SEASONS

1957	Sophocles:	Antigone	1969	Euripides:	The Bacchae
				Shakespeare:	The Merchant of Venice
1958	Sophocles:	Oedipus Rex		Shakespeare:	The Comedy of Errors
				Aristophanes:	The Wasps
1959	Euripides:	Iphigenia in Aulis			
1960	Euripides:	Alcestis	1970	Sophocles:	Philoctetes
	Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One		Shakespeare:	As You Like It
				Shakespeare:	Measure for Measure
				Aristophanes:	Ecclesiazusae
1961	Sophocles:	Antigone	1971	Euripides:	Hecuba
	Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One		Shakespeare:	The Taming of a Shrew
	Shakespeare:	Macbeth		Shakespeare:	King Lear
	Aristophanes:	The Birds		Aristophanes:	Plutus
1962	Sophocles:	Ajax	1972	Sophocles:	Antigone
	Shakespeare:	Twelfth Night		Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One
	Shakespeare:	Othello		Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part Two
	Aristophanes:	The Frogs		Aristophanes:	The Knights
1963	Euripides:	Medea	1973	Euripides:	Medea
	Shakespeare:	A Midsummer Night's Dream		Shakespeare:	Romeo and Juliet
	Shakespeare:	Richard II		Aristophanes:	The Birds
	Aristophanes:	The Clouds		Barber:	<i>A Hand of Bridge</i>
				Menotti:	<i>The Old Maid and the Thief</i>
1964	Euripides:	The Trojan Women	1974	Aeschylus:	Seven Against Thebes
	Shakespeare:	Much Ado About Nothing		Shakespeare:	Twelfth Night
	Shakespeare:	Coriolanus		Shakespeare:	Antony and Cleopatra
	Aristophanes:	The Acharnians		Floyd:	<i>Slow Dusk</i>
	Shaw:	Don Juan in Hell		Dougherty:	<i>Many Moons</i>
	Shaw:	The Dark Lady of the Sonnets			
	Moeller:	Helena's Husband	1975	Euripides:	The Trojan Women
1965	Sophocles:	Elektra		Shakespeare:	A Midsummer Night's Dream
	Shakespeare:	The Tempest		Shakespeare:	"Sounds and Sweet Airs"
	Shakespeare:	Macbeth		Aristophanes:	The Frogs
1966	Sophocles:	Oedipus Rex	1976	Euripides:	The Bacchae
	Shakespeare:	Hamlet		Shakespeare:	The Tempest
	Shakespeare:	"Sounds and Sweet Airs"		Shakespeare:	Much Ado About Nothing
	Aristophanes:	Thesmophoriazusae		Aristophanes:	The Clouds
				Mascagni:	<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>
1967	Aeschylus:	Prometheus Bound	1977	Sophocles:	Oedipus at Colonus
	Shakespeare:	Julius Caesar		Shakespeare:	Richard II
	Fry:	A Phoenix Too Frequent		Aristophanes:	Thesmophoriazusae
1968	Sophocles:	Ajax		Copland:	<i>The Tender Land</i>
	Shakespeare:	The Merry Wives of Windsor			
	Shakespeare:	Richard III			
	Aristophanes:	Peace			

- 1978 Sophocles: Elektra
 Shakespeare: Julius Caesar
 Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Mikado*
- 1979 Sophocles: Oedipus Rex
 Shakespeare: The Merry Wives of Windsor
 Shakespeare: Richard III
 Aristophanes: The Acharnians
 Gilbert-sullivan: *H.M.S. Pinafore*
- 1980 Euripides: Alcestis
 Shakespeare: Measure for Measure
 Greissecker: Royal Gambit
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Pirates of Penzance*
- 1981 Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound
 Shakespeare: Hamlet
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Shaw: Don Juan in Hell
 Shaw: The Dark Lady of the Sonnets
 Fry: A Phoenix Too Frequent
 Gheon: The Comedian
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Yeoman of the Guard*
- 1982 Sophocles: Antigone
 Shakespeare: As You Like It
 Shakespeare: Coriolanus
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Mikado*
- 1983 Euripides: Medea
 Shakespeare: The Taming of the Shrew
 Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet
 Aristophanes: The Birds
 Menotti: *The Telephone*
 various: *Arias*
- 1984 Euripides: Hippolytus
 Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors
 Shakespeare: Othello
 Aristophanes: The Frogs
 Offenbach: *Ba-Ta-Clan*
- 1985 Sophocles: Ajax
 Euripides: Helen
 Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida
 Giroudoux: The Tiger at the Gates
 Moeller: Helena's Husband
 Offenbach: *La Belle Helene*
- 1986 Sophocles: The Women of Trachis
 Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream
 Shakespeare: Macbeth
 Aristophanes: Peace
 Offenbach: *Orpheus in the Underworld*
- 1987 Euripides: The Trojan Women
 Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale
 Aristophanes: The Knights
 Moliere: The Doctor in Spite of Himself
 Offenbach: *La Perichole*
 Shakespeare: King Lear (Deere)
- 1988 Euripides: The Bacchae
 Shakespeare: The Two Gentlemen of Verona
 Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice
 Aristophanes: The Clouds
 Mozart: *The Impresario*
 Menotti: *The Old Maid and the Thief*
 Shaw: Don Juan in Hell (R.I. Library)
 Shakespeare: "Sound & Sweet Airs" (R.I. Library)
- 1989 Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part One
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part Two
 Aristophanes: Thesmophoriazusae
 Mozart: *Così fan tutte*
- 1990 Aeschylus: The Oresteia
 Agamemnon
 The Choephores
 The Eumenides
 Shakespeare: Henry V
 Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae
 Mozart: *The Marriage of Figaro*
- 1991 Sophocles: Oedipus Rex
 Shakespeare: Twelfth Night
 Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing
 Aristophanes: The Acharnians
 Mozart: *The Magic Flute*
 Eliot: Murder in the Cathedral (various churches)
- 1992 Sophocles: Antigone
 Shakespeare: All's Well That Ends Well
 Shakespeare: King John
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Salieri: *A Little Harlequinade*
 Mozart: *The Goose of Cairo*

- 1993 Euripides: Hecuba
 Shakespeare: Merry Wives of Windsor
 Shakespeare: The Tempest
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Mozart: *La Finta Giardiniera*
- 1994: Euripides: Medea
 Shakespeare: As You Like It
 Shakespeare: Measure for Measure
 Aristophanes: Peace
 Mozart: *Don Giovanni*
- 1995: Euripides: Andromache
 Shakespeare: A Comedy of Errors
 Shakespeare: Antony & Cleopatra
 Aristophanes: The Knights
 Mozart: *Bastien and Bastienne*
 Barab: *Little Red Riding Hood*
 A Shakespeare Review
 (Regional Rotary Meeting)
- 1996 Aeschylus: The Persians
 Shakespeare: Love's Labour's Lost
 Shakespeare: King Lear
 Aristophanes: The Birds
 Mozart: *A Retrospective Concert*
- 1997 Euripides: Alcestis
 Shakespeare: Midsummer Night's Dream
 Shakespeare: Romeo & Juliet
 Aristophanes: The Frogs
Ballet Under the Stars
- 1998 Euripides: Elektra
 Shakespeare: The Taming of the Shrew
 Shakespeare: Julius Caesar
 Aristophanes: The Clouds
Ballet Under the Stars
- 1999 Sophocles: Ajax
 Shakespeare: Two Gentlemen of Verona
 Shakespeare: Richard II
 Aristophanes: Thesmophoriazuseae
Ballet Under the Stars
- 2000 Aeschylus: The Suppliants
 Shakespeare: Twelfth Night
 Shakespeare: Richard III
 Aristophanes: Ecclesiazuseae
Ballet Under the Stars
"Shakespeare: A Working Professional"
"Shakespeare: His Life In His Works"
- 2001 Euripides: The Trojan Women
 Shaw: Dark Lady Of the Sonnets
 Fry: A Phoenix Too Frequent
 Shakespeare: Hamlet
 Aristophanes: The Acharnians
Ballet Under the Stars
"The Idea Of Tragedy"
- 2002 Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound
 Gheon: Parade At the
 Devil's Bridge
 The Sausage-Maker's
 Interlude
 Anon: Miracle of St. Nicholas
 3 School Clerks
 Shakespeare: Macbeth
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Puccini: *Gianni Schicchi*
Ballet Under the Stars
- 2003 Euripides: The Bacchae
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part One
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part Two
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Menotti: *The Telephone*
 Gilbert & Sullivan: *Trial By Jury*
Ballet Under the Stars
"Shakespeare's Big Four"
- 2004 Sophocles: Oedipus Rex
 Shakespeare: The Merry Wives of
 Windsor
 Shakespeare: Othello
 Aristophanes: Peace
 Larsen: *Barnum's Bird*
Ballet Under the Stars
"The Phoenix, the Turtle, and the Swan"
 "Ballet Under the Stars"
- 2005 Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus
 Shakespeare: Much Ado About
 Nothing
 Aristophanes: Knights
 Gilbert & Sullivan: The Pirates of Penzance
Ballet Under the Stars
- 2006 **50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON**
 Aeschylus: Seven Against Thebes
 Sophocles: Antigone
 Shakespeare: The Tempest
 Gheon: The Comedian
 (Story of Genesis)
 Aristophanes: The Birds
 Gilbert & Sullivan: The Mikado
Ballet Under the Stars